



Born To Sing: A singer's journey toward mind-body unity

By Ron Murdock

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Born To Sing: A singer's journey toward mind-body unity offers the reader a completely new approach to understanding the art of singing as a gift with which each person is born yet requiring thorough and conscious training. The training described is not through physical effort but through learning an awareness of the body's natural forces and connecting with the desire of the human heart to express and communicate beauty. The uniqueness of this beautifully written book in a deeply personal, story telling style is found in the premise that the voice is already within the singer and only needs to be released. The text is accompanied by 49 extraordinarily fine, sensitive, hand-drawn anatomical and physiological illustrations by Korina Kaiserslot. Ron Murdock trained with the highly respected European voice pedagogues Professor Frederick Husler and Yvonne Rodd-Marling and has combined that training with his training as a teacher of the F. M. Alexander Technique into an authoritative, human-centered pedagogy. In *Born to Sing* he calls on his 40 years experience to create a work of art that will be a practical guide and a true inspiration to everyone interested in the art of singing and mind-body unity. This is a book to read in depth, to enjoy and study. Singers and voice users at every level, as well as voice teachers and Alexander Technique teachers, will find a wealth of information here. The book is accompanied by a one hour 30 minute DVD containing both audio and visual sound examples, three teaching demonstrations, and an in-depth interview with the author.

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Editorial Review

Review

In his book *Born to Sing* Ron Murdock forges new paths. He combines the groundbreaking singing technique of Frederick Husler with the technique developed by F. M. Alexander together with his own wide reaching experience as a singing teacher. He knows exactly what is involved: *The body sings!* --Professor Thomas Heyer, Hochschule für Musik und darstellende Kunst, Frankfurt am Main, Germany

The Alexander Technique Leads to a Journey of Vocal Discovery

It has been Ron Murdock's life's work to bring together the philosophies of European vocal pedagogues Frederick Husler and Yvonne Rodd-Marling with the principles of the Alexander Technique. After more than 40 years of study, practice, and teaching, he outlines his experience in the book *Born to Sing: A Singer's Journey toward Mind-Body Unity*, published by Mornum Time Press.

The title *Born to Sing* refers to Murdock's firmly held belief that we all inherently know how to sing already. Even young and amateur singers, he says, should be encouraged to build and discover their vocal abilities from the approach that the answers within merely need to be uncovered and awakened. He has witnessed firsthand the embarrassment and fear that come about when people are told they cannot sing. These cruel words can last a lifetime, depriving individuals of what Murdock calls a right as basic and natural as using one's hands, skipping, or breathing.

Therefore, while the title of the book tells us why it was written, the subtitle (*A Singer's Journey toward Mind-Body Unity*) gets closer to the details of how to sing that are explored in the pages between the covers. Focusing on techniques for building physical efficiency, *Born to Sing* is one part guide to the Alexander Technique and one part autobiography, chronicling the author's life and studies.

Singers familiar with the Alexander Technique will recognize familiar language in *Born to Sing: A Singer's Journey toward Mind-Body Unity*. Author Ron Murdock uses phrases like encouraging the soft palate to widen and release and allow the lower jaw to drop slightly. Rather than do and do not, he chooses affirming statements like this is the state the vocal mechanism wants to be in.

He makes easy ties between the philosophies of his voice teachers, Frederick Husler and Yvonne Rodd-Marling, and the principles advocated by Alexander. Advocating muscular mobility instead of strength, being fully present by directing focus to particular areas of the body, and using thoughts like having kindness in one's eyes to release the facial muscles are some of the common themes.

Similarly, Murdock eschews potentially confusing phrases like breath support and replaces them with the idea of full-body coordination. One of the highlights of the book is the inclusion of 49 beautifully detailed illustrations of the body used to provide images for functional understanding. Chapter 9 displays the structural bones and muscles that allow postural balance, Chapter 13 addresses vocal anatomy and depicts the systems involved in phonation and articulation, and Chapter 14 portrays the muscles responsible for breathing and explains their function.

Murdock feels that many problems singers encounter can be avoided by a clear understanding of how the voice works alongside a balanced use of the self. To this end, he requires his voice students to study the Alexander Technique before beginning vocal instruction. In the same vein, he has not included vocal

exercises in the book, believing this technical work is best accomplished on an individual basis with experienced vocal pedagogues. The book, however, may be used either as a precursor to Alexander study or perhaps as a supplement once Alexander work has begun.

Born to Sing is both a beautiful homage to Murdock's influential teachers and an important medium to further their useful philosophies and solidify their legacy. While informative and practical, readers will also find inspiration in the personal stories held within.

Brian Manternach Tenor Brian Manternach teaches voice at the University of Utah in the Musical Theatre Program. --Classical Singer Magazine

A beautifully written book using clear language, with beautiful, lively hand drawn illustrations by Korina Kaisershot. What Ron Murdock writes about singing and breathing stimulates me to use my body in a very respectful and loving way in order to perform my musical ideas. Using my body correctly means singing and making music correctly without the interfering muscle tensions built up through the years which block what I wish to express. This book shows a clear way how to rebalance and co-ordinate the body when singing; reading this book is like having an actual lesson with the author. --Karolina Brachman, Soprano. Wuppertal, Germany

About the Author

Ron Murdock comes from Nova Scotia in Canada. He is a graduate from Mount Allison University, Sackville, New Brunswick (B.A., A.Mus.1962) and the Constructive Teaching Center, London (1979). Between the years 1969 and 1995 he lived and worked as a professional solo tenor in London, England. For the last 38 years has taught voice on a regular basis, in combination with the Alexander technique, to private pupils in London, Amsterdam, Hamburg, Cologne and Berlin. As well he has given master classes in many European cities, as well as in Montreal and New York. Between 1995 and 2006 he gave Alexander lessons to soloists at the Salzburg Festival. Since 2010, together with his wife, Nadia Kevan, he is co-director of a training course for Alexander teachers in Nijmegen, The Netherlands. He continues teaching voice and the Alexander Technique privately there.

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